

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CONTACT:** Laura Capps/ Melissa Wagoner  
(202) 224-2633

**REMARKS OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON THE AMERICA COMPETES ACT**

WASHINGTON, DC— Late last night, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, released the following statement on the passage by the United States Senate of the America COMPETES Act, which invests in education, especially in math, science, engineering, and technology, creates a President's Council to encourage innovation, and doubles the support for research at the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation for the next seven years.

Senator Kennedy said, "The America COMPETES bill takes needed steps to create a stronger America in the global economy. Greater investments in education, research and innovation are essential for meeting the challenges of this new century. The nation has done it before, and we can do it again."

***(As Prepared for Delivery)***

Our increasingly global economy is creating numerous challenges for America's families nationwide. Across the country, hardworking citizens are being left behind. The value of their wages is declining, their cost of living is going up, and many of their jobs are being shipped overseas.

As a result, the nation is falling behind in the world economy. Study after study tells us the answer is to invest more in education, research and innovation, if we hope to keep up with other countries whose economies are soaring.

We know that a sound education is more important than ever for today's youth to succeed. Yet studies show, for example, that 15-year-old U.S. students score below average in math and science compared to the youth of other industrial nations. In one study, our 15 year olds ranked only 24th in math. High school and college graduation rates are also falling behind. Our college graduation rate today has now dropped below the average graduation rate for OECD countries.

We know that federal investments in research lead to medical, scientific, and technology breakthroughs. But these investments have been shrinking as a share of the economy. In real terms, government spending for research has been flat. Since 1975, we've dropped from 3rd to 15th in the production of scientists and engineers.

It's a serious problem and we can't just tinker at the margins. We have a responsibility to our people, our economy, our security, and our nation to make the investments to achieve the progress we need in the years ahead.

The America COMPETES Act is a step in the right direction. It will help put America back on track.

It invests in research, by doubling the support for research at the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation over the next 7 years, and will increase funding for the National Institute of Standards and Technology as well.

It invests in innovation, by creating a President's Council on Innovation and Competitiveness to determine the most effective ways to create jobs and move our economy forward.

Above all, it will invest in education, especially in math and science, engineering, and technology from the elementary school through high school and beyond, in order to attract more young people to pursue careers in these fields in the years ahead.

The problem today is especially serious for our low-income and minority students. Teachers are the single most important factor in improving student achievement and narrowing the achievement gap. One study found that having a high quality teacher for five years in a row can close the average 7th grade achievement gap in math between lower income and higher income children. Yet too often, low-income and minority students are taught by the least prepared, least experienced, and least qualified teachers. Math and science classes in high-poverty schools are much more likely to be taught by teachers who do not have a degree in their field.

We know what we need to do, and this bill will help us do it. We must make sure all students are getting the teachers they need and deserve in the subjects that matter most in the new economy.

This bill addresses the teacher challenge head on by taking strong steps to ensure that all children have access to a high quality teacher with strong content knowledge in math, science, engineering and technology – particularly in high need schools, where such teachers are needed most.

The bill expands the Robert Noyce Teacher Program of the National Science Foundation (NSF) by creating a new NSF Teaching Fellows program to prepare accomplished math, science, technology and engineering professionals to teach in high need schools. It also creates a Master Teaching Fellows program to leverage the talents of the best teachers to improve instruction in high need schools. Teaching Fellows in the program will receive annual salary supplements of \$10,000 a year in exchange for a commitment to teach for at least four years in a high need school.

The bill also expands the Teacher Institutes for the 21st Century Program at NSF, which provides cutting-edge professional development programs throughout the school year and during the summer for teachers in high-need schools.

In addition, the bill supports impressive new programs in colleges and universities to prepare math, science, technology, engineering and foreign language teachers. These programs will combine bachelor's degrees with concurrent teacher certification in their subjects, and will create master's degree programs for teachers to improve their knowledge in these subjects and to encourage math and science professionals to go into teaching.

Too often today, elementary and secondary school standards are not aligned with the expectations of colleges and employers. In many cases, high school graduates are struggling to keep up in college and the workplace. Remedial education and lost earning potential cost the nation 3.7 billion a year, because so many students are not adequately prepared for college when they leave high school.

Our bill will help states align their standards with the demands of the 21st century workplace. Grants to states to create P-16 Councils will bring the elementary and secondary schools, college, businesses, and the Armed Forces together to ensure that education standards are better aligned with the expectations of colleges, the workforce, and the military. This alignment is essential if we hope to remain internationally competitive. Support will also be available for new data systems in states to track students' achievement and help them graduate prepared to succeed.

The bill will help give students in low-income districts the same opportunities as those in wealthier districts to enroll and succeed in college preparatory classes, by expanding access to Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes.

This bill invests as well in foreign language education, to ensure that students are exposed to

foreign languages and cultures. More than 80 Federal agencies now use tens of thousands of employees with skills in 100 foreign languages, and our businesses need the same.

For students to become proficient in foreign languages, they need sustained study, beginning in the early grades. But only a third of students in grades 7 through 12 today and only 5 percent of elementary school students study a foreign language. The bill provides grants to colleges and local educational agencies to create partnerships for students from elementary school through college to study such languages.

Finally, the bill will encourage new interest in nuclear science. Massachusetts has long been a leader in this research. Of three dozen licensed research reactors in the United States, three are located in Massachusetts universities – The University of Massachusetts in Lowell, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and MIT. These colleges will have an increasingly important role as nuclear science expands, and our bill will expand existing programs and establish new ones to meet the growing demand.

All of these programs and investments are designed to help prepare us to compete in the 21st century, but there is more we must do if we intend to keep our nation and our workforce truly competitive. Significant new investments are needed to expand opportunities for higher education. College is more important than ever today, but it is also more expensive than ever.

In the Senate two weeks ago, we passed the largest increase in student aid since the G.I. Bill, and I look forward to delivering that aid for low-income students as quickly as possible.

We must also address the increasingly demanding impact of the global economy on American workers and their families. Our hard-working men and women deserve greater job security today and greater job opportunities in the future.

This bill puts first things first. Increased investments in education, research, and innovation are indispensable to our success as a nation. We've done it before and we must do it again. Let's begin with this bill.

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